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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the context of indigenous language education in western Canada, the hope of language revitalization, and the role of the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) in reclaiming and stabilizing these languages. CILLDI was established in 1999 by a collective of language advocates and educators who saw the need for continued professional development for First Nations people as they struggled to stabilize their languages and provide effective language communities throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan. CILLDI believes that the knowledge inherent in indigenous languages and cultures and the voice of indigenous people is critical for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity in Western Canada. In 2001, it offered four undergraduate courses and one graduate seminar. The paper outlines CILLDI goals; describes its development, administration, and funding; offers examples of curriculum and pedagogy; and discusses how they are contributing to the development of these languages as resources. Finally, it addresses ongoing issues and concerns. (Contains 29 references.) (SM)

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Preparing Indigenous Language Advocates, Teachers, and Researchers in Western Canada

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> Language is the outward expression of an accumulation of learning and experience shared by a group of people over centuries of development. It is not simply a vocal symbol; it is a dynamic force, which shapes the way a man looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life. Knowing his maternal language helps a man to know himself; being proud of his language helps a man to be proud of himself. (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, pp. 14-15)

As is evident in this statement, the Indigenous peoples of Canada recognize the value of their languages and have been concerned for some time about the possibility of the loss of this resource. Our intentions in this paper are to discuss the context of Indigenous language education in Western Canada, the hope of language revitalization, and the role of the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI) in the reclamation and stabilization of these languages. We outline the goals of the Institute; describe its development, administration, and funding; give examples of curriculum and pedagogy; and discuss how they are contributing to the development of these "languages as resources" (Ruiz, 1990). Finally, our ongoing issues and concerns will be addressed.

In the Western Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan the shortage of teachers, curriculum developers, researchers, and community linguists prepared to work in Indigenous language education is critical. Although there have been Indigenous teacher education programs at several of the universities and community-based programs in these provinces since the 1970s, with the exception of the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College at the University of Regina, limited attention has been paid to the preparation of bilingual and biliterate teachers (Ahenakew, Blair, & Fredeen, 1994).

During the 1970s and early 1980s many of the bilingual graduates of these programs taught in provincial, federal, and band-administered schools where the children came to school speaking their mother tongue. At that time many of these bilingual teachers used both their mother tongue and English to assist the children in their English language acquisition through ESL instruction and programming. Indigenous languages were also taught as a subject in some schools (Littlejohn & Fredeen, 1993). During the early to mid 1970s there was an interest in Indigenous language and bilingual program development (Lac La Ronge Indian Band, 1983; Manitoba Department of Education, 1975). Several bilingual-bicultural programs were initiated following the publication of the National Indian Brotherhood position paper "Indian Control of Indian Education" in 1972, in which the authors acknowledged the importance of these languages and petitioned for support for Indigenous languages in schools:

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> While much can be done by parents in the home and by the community on the reserve to foster facility in speaking and understanding, there is a great need for formal instruction in the language. There are two aspects to this language instruction: (1) teaching in the native language, and (2) teaching the native language." (p. 15)

At approximately the same time there was a growing awareness of bilingualism and Indigenous languages in the United States. The Rough Rock Demonstration School (Menninger, 1968) and Rock Point Community School (Vorih & Rosier, 1978) were recognized as models for programming that could benefit the retention of Indigenous languages. Some community members from Western Canadian schools visited these schools in Arizona and brought back ideas that they thought they could implement in their communities and schools.

Over the past three decades the Canadian language context has changed radically, and the children from most of these First Nations communities were no longer coming to school with much, if any, fluency in their Mother tongue (Blair & Fredeen, 1995; Government of Canada, 1996; Saskatchewan Indigenous Languages Committee, 1991). Many teachers working in First Nations schools stopped using Indigenous languages for classroom instruction as they had in the previous years and reverted to English as the primary language of instruction. It was thought that if these children were no longer mother tongue Indigenous language speakers and English was no longer a second language, then why not just use English? The changes were slow, and few community members recognized that their languages were at risk (Blair, 1997). This language shift, similar to that which has taken place among many minority language communities throughout the world (Wurm, 1991), placed these languages at the extreme risk of disappearing. Currently, in many schools in Western Canada the Indigenous languages continue to be taught primarily as a core subject or second language, with 40 to 90 minutes of instruction per week.

During the mid 1990s and with the publication of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Government of Canada, 1996), there has been a growing recognition in Western Canada of the urgent need for preservation of Canada's Indigenous languages, many of which face extinction if current trends continue. Over the past five years, there have been several Indigenous language immersion programs (Billy, 2000; Blair, 1997; Bull, personal communication, October 2, 2002; Jimmy, personal communication, September 16, 2002; McKay-Carrier, personal communication, September 19, 2002; Seegerts, 2002) springing up in Western Canada, and it has become evident that we need to provide speakers, teachers, community linguists, language planners, and curriculum developers for these programs if they are to be successful and these languages are to be maintained.

The newly founded CILLDI is our effort to address the issue of Indigenous language revitalization in Western Canada through providing summer courses to prepare teachers, researchers, and advocates to work in these Indigenous communities. Planning for the revitalization of these languages will require exper-

tise and action to address the status of the languages, the corpus of the languages, the preparation for implementing appropriate programming, and the research and evaluation of these endeavors (Ruiz, 1994).

The emergence of CILLDI

The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute was established in 1999 by a collective of language advocates and educators who saw the need for continued professional development for First Nations people as they struggle to stabilize their languages and provide effective language programs in communities throughout Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The CILLDI Advisory council members[1] recognized the need to provide opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians to gain the linguistic, language, culture, and pedagogical expertise to work toward the preservation, development, and promotion of the Indigenous languages of Western Canada. The members of this council believed that Indigenous languages are extremely valuable resources and central to the retention of Indigenous knowledge. Battiste (2000), a well-known Canadian Indigenous scholar, said it this way:

> Aboriginal languages are the means of communication for the full range of human experiences, and they are critical to the survival of the culture and political integrity of any people. These languages are a direct and powerful means of understanding the legacy of tribal knowledge. They provide the deep and lasting cognitive bonds that affect all aspects of Aboriginal life. Through sharing a language, Aboriginal people create a shared belief in how the world works and what constitutes proper action. The sharing of these common ideals creates a collective cognitive experience for tribal societies that is understood as tribal epistemology. (p. 199)

In both provinces several agencies such as the Indigenous Languages Retention Committee in Saskatchewan (Okimasis & Wolvengray, 1999) and the Departments of Education in Alberta and Saskatchewan have been taking on new initiatives to support languages and raise the awareness among those working in this field. The Retention Committee has provided some support for local and regional language festivals, newsletters, and supplementary materials production such as CDs and audiotapes of Indigenous languages and songs. The Departments of Education have begun to coordinate Indigenous languages curriculum across Western Canada. The CILLDI Advisory Council, recognizing these efforts, saw the need for a coordinated effort on a larger scale and began to look at the professional needs of language teachers and community language leaders in the adjacent provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. This council saw the need for postsecondary education opportunities for individuals working in schools, community agencies, and postsecondary institutions. Several of the council members attended the American Indian Languages Development Insti-

tute (AILDI) in Tucson, Arizona, and the Annual Stabilizing Indigenous Language Conferences, and through these efforts recognized the need for a coordination of efforts at home. CILLDI was modeled on the American counterpart, AILDI, which had started 20 years earlier when community members and teachers from Peach Springs in Northern Arizona, who were in the process of initiating an Indigenous language program in their school, recognized their need "to use linguistic knowledge to improve curriculum and practice in Indian schools" (McCarty, Watahomigie, Yamamoto, & Zepeda, 1997, p. 85). This group attended the first Yuman Languages Institute at San Diego State University, and AILDI was one of the outcomes. AILDI has provided a valuable professional development opportunity for many Canadians involved in Indigenous language over the years, and the CILLDI council members believed that it was time to look at ways to provide this for our people at home.

The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute Advisory Council's efforts were also inspired by the work of individuals such as Dr. Freda Ahenakew, a Cree linguist and recipient of the Order of Canada, and Dr. Verna Kirkness, a Cree scholar and language advocate. Dr. Ahenakew's extensive linguistic research and her publications have contributed significantly to the body of work in this field (Ahenakew, 1987; Ahenakew & Wolfart, 1992; Wolfart & Ahenakew, 1998). Dr. Kirkness, as a teacher, teacher educator, curriculum consultant, and language advocate, has been an inspiration and mentor for many Indigenous language teachers across Western Canada (Kirkness, 1998). These two Indigenous language advocates assisted us in understanding the importance and magnitude of the work we needed to do.

At CILLDI we believe that the knowledge inherent in Indigenous languages and cultures and the voice of Indigenous people is critical for the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity in Western Canada and that the loss of these languages and cultures will have dire consequences for both the Indigenous groups and Canadian society as a whole. Similarly, Zepeda and Hill (1991) have suggested that these languages are "one of the great treasures of humanity, an enormous storehouse of expressive power and profound understanding of the universe" (p. 45). These ideas are also supported in other Indigenous communities, as is evident in this statement by Maori researcher and educator Smith (1999) when she stated, "The past, our stories local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices—all may be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope: (p. 4). The Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute is becoming such a space.

Administration and funding

CILLDI has been a joint project between the University of Alberta, the University of Saskatchewan, and the local host Indigenous communities. From the outset the CILLDI Advisory Council decided that the members of the Institute needed to meet annually and that the meeting should be hosted in a First Nations community. It was also decided that it would be alternately delivered

between Saskatchewan and Alberta because the needs are great in both provinces, but resources are limited. The individuals on the committee from the University of Alberta and the University of Saskatchewan agreed to host and sponsor the institute in alternative years. CILLDI 2000 was held at Onion Lake First Nations in Saskatchewan during July 2000 and received financial support from the Office of the President and the Indigenous Peoples Program through the Faculty of Extension at the University of Saskatchewan, as well as the Faculty of Education and the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. The Indigenous Peoples program at the University of Saskatchewan facilitated the registration and budget, and this first summer the CILLDI council co-administered the delivery of the program. Fifteen students attended from the three Prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. CILLDI 2001 was hosted at Blue Quills First Nations College at St. Paul, Alberta, with funding primarily from the President, the Faculties of Education and Arts, and the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. Some support was provided by the Indigenous Peoples Program at the University of Saskatchewan. CILLDI 2001 was primarily administered by the council members from the host province. The 32 students at CILLDI 2001 came from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and the Northwest Territories of Canada.

A great deal of effort went into the planning, promotion, fund raising, resource surfacing, and overall preparation for each year of the Institute. This was complicated by the fact that the council was dealing with two universities and numerous departments within each university. Each year the following administrative planning needed to be done: the selection of appropriate courses, the development and approval of new courses through both universities, the coordination of special events, the facilitation of Elder involvement, the recruitment of faculty and language lab assistants, the promotion of the Institute, and the recruitment and registration of students. The Advisory Council members from each university collected and compiled the courses and Institute information for publication in their respective summer sessions calendars. These same council members also liaised with summer sessions personnel throughout student registration and as other administrative issues arose. Council members also sought funding from both universities, targeting offices of the presidents as well as the Faculties of Arts, Education, and Native Studies. The council found that working with many departments and two universities in two provinces was difficult and time consuming. Although the council initially saw it as beneficial to have numerous funding sources, there are some concerns about a lack of ownership and financial responsibility on the part of each major institution. We are currently in the process of reviewing these administrative issues and looking for more permanent funding.

Curriculum and pedagogy

At CILLDI we are committed to developing courses and a program that are responsive to the needs and concerns of Indigenous language teachers and First Nations communities. The CILLDI Advisory Council recognized the need for a

program that included courses in Indigenous languages, linguistics, language education curriculum, pedagogy, and research; and we are continuing to work through how we develop, coordinate, and alternate our course offerings. We have established a core of classes offered each year, and then new courses in areas of need as identified by faculty and students.

CILLDI 2000 began with one undergraduate course designed for speakers of Cree that focused on language and literacy development. The students were primarily classroom teachers and undergraduate students who felt that they needed to learn more about their language and use it more extensively in order to become better Cree language teachers. This course included an extensive oral Cree language component, a Cree vocabulary and grammar module, and an introduction to Cree literary practices. It was delivered in an immersion context on reserve, and students were encouraged to ask and respond to all discussions and questions in the Cree language. The course was based on cultural thematic units with cultural arts incorporated into each theme. The oral language module provided a range of oral communicative activities: conversations in personal and professional contexts, traditional cultural practices, and Elders' story telling. The written language module was based on holistic literacy practices; journal writing, personal narratives, autobiographies, and short story writing; as well as reading across the genre.

That year an informal language use policy was established that encouraged all participants to speak Cree both inside and outside of class. In order to extend the immersion opportunities, we organized cooking groups, and each group of students prepared one lunch for the rest of the students, faculty, and Elders. This task was to be done completely in Cree; it included writing the shopping list in Cree, writing the recipe in Cree, speaking Cree while preparing the meal, and speaking Cree throughout the lunches. If anyone reverted to English during the lunch, they then had to stand up and tell a story or a joke. This became the focus of a great deal of fun and was a small reminder of the importance of reinforcing the status of Indigenous languages in all contexts and on all occasions.

At CILLDI 2001 we offered four undergraduate courses and one graduate seminar. These were as follows: An Introduction to the Structure of the Cree Language for Cree Speakers; An Introduction to Dene Language and Culture; Introduction to Linguistics; Literacy and Drama in Aboriginal Language Education; and a graduate seminar on Reversing Language Change: Planning for Indigenous Language and Literacy Development. Each course was co-taught with at least one fluent speaker so that the students would have the opportunity to hear as much natural Indigenous language use as possible. In the Cree language class, where the students had a fair degree of fluency in Cree, the instructor and teaching assistant, both of whom were bilingual, delivered the class using immersion practices. The Dene language and culture students were either nonspeakers or receptive bilinguals, and the course was taught by bilingual co-instructors in a bilingual fashion. The cultural component of these two courses was addressed on a daily basis with the assistance of Elders. The Introduction to Linguistics course was taught in English by the instructor, who provided Dene

examples, and a Cree-speaking teacher assistant, who provided Cree translations and examples. The Literacy and Drama in Aboriginal Language Education course was taught bilingually by an English-speaking instructor and a bilingual Cree actor.

Throughout the Institute we had a series of guest speakers on the following topics: Computers in First Nations language education, total physical response as a method in Aboriginal language classrooms; and integrating Cree language and culture into provincial social studies curriculum. These events were attended by all students and faculty and provided a range of ideas for further deliberation.

At CILLDI 2002 we expanded our course offerings to include Intermediate Cree Language, Culture, and Literacy; Introduction to Linguistics for Dene and Cree Speakers; Literacy and Drama in Aboriginal Language Education; Teaching Second Languages in Elementary Education; and Ethnography: An Inquiry Into the Social Contexts of Aboriginal Language, Literacy, and Learning. This Institute's setting in Northern Canada provided students with the opportunity to meet with Elders in an isolated setting, travel by boat to observe ancient petroglyph sites, and be immersed in Northern Bush Cree language and literacy.

Strengths and contributions

Central to each of our Institutes has been the cultural component, and the Elders and community members have contributed a great deal. We believe that the traditional beliefs and practices of each of the Indigenous communities with whom we work need to be respected and followed. At each Institute we have ensured that local community Elders are involved and traditional protocol is followed, and the Elders' blessings and involvement are an integral part of the Institute on a daily basis. According to Paskemin & Paskemin (2000):

> Protocol in the Nehiyaw/Plains Cree society is conducted in virtually every capacity of livelihood.... Practicing protocol reflects on the components of acquiring knowledge and skill, personal and professional, specifically in the academic mode. There is no exact Nehiyaw/Plains Cree interpretation of the English translation of protocol. By definition, the concept of protocol, to the Nehiyaw/Plains Cree people would be: the correct way of doing things (p. 1).

During both of our Institutes the Elders were also our language informants, cultural leaders, historians, counselors, and spiritual guides. Elders and community members have facilitated tipi-raising ceremonies and when possible have brought in traditional drummers and singers. Each Institute has begun with a talking circle and prayers from the Elders. We have tried to live a part of the circle throughout our Institute as we follow the beliefs and philosophies of the Indigenous communities in which we are working. One of our ongoing goals is to integrate the Elders as teachers more fully into our Institute.

At CILLDI we expect full participation from all of our students and faculty. We have student and staff meetings to organize a range of activities to do to-

gether outside of class time. We value each person's contribution and believe CILLDI to be a shared responsibility among all participants. We encourage our students to know and value their cultural background and provide opportunities for them to be able to find the words in the language of their choice to articulate what these mean to them.

Throughout the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute we have documented the process of program and curriculum development, observed classroom interactions, videotaped classroom practices, and compiled field notes in order to document the process of supporting Indigenous language revitalization. We have interviewed CILLDI Advisory Committee members, instructors, students, Elders, and visiting guests. The students' responses to the Institute have been overwhelmingly positive and support what we believe about planning for languages at risk of obsolescence. At CILLDI 2000 a student made the following comment: "Continuing to speak the Cree language was most useful to me; listening to Elders speaking in Cree was just as important. The cultural component was very beneficial for me." Another student commented, "Everything was great. I especially liked the cultural component. I have never experienced this kind of instruction; it is very interesting and keeps you focused." CILLDI 2001 students commented on their overall satisfaction:

> I actually took this course because I had heard this instructor was 'awesome.' I was not disappointed.
>
> People from the university level, people with PhDs or Masters, they're getting involved with more or less the grassroots people and I think that's a very good move.
>
> I'm really glad to see an Institute such as this one because for years I've been looking to improve myself in the area of language work and curriculum and so forth as it relates to Native languages. It has been difficult to find courses in Canada that offer this. I hope it grows into something bigger.
>
> Keep it up! Let's all bring one more person next year.

One of the most powerful experiences for all participants at CILLDI 2001 was a creative theatre production called Waniskâtân. Diane Steinhauer (2001) described it as follows:

> Waniskâtân is a play about revitalization of the Cree language with the powerful message that if we love our children, we will teach them our language. Creating 'waniskâtân,' is about the power of storytelling and developing relationships. Relationships and storytelling are so intertwined that you can not have one without the other. (p. 1)

She went on to discuss the importance of understanding the stories of language:

> A community's history is encapsulated in story; it speaks of their resiliency, perseverance, and âhkamayimowin. We are still here. Despite the hardships, the very fact that we have stories to share states that we are still here. Through contextual theatre, people are moved to act. The players are empowered by giving voice to their stories in a meaningful context. The audience is moved to respond by owning the issue and seeking solutions. (p. 1)

CILLDI has become for students and faculty alike a place to regroup after a busy year, to take on new ideas, and to share new understandings with like-minded people who care about these issues. As CILLDI continues to develop and grow, as we continue to refine our pedagogical practices, find ways to ensure that our language planning is supported, and provide language courses and resources for practitioners, we expect to see CILLDI become a significant factor in language retention efforts in Western Canada.

Ongoing resource development and issues

After two years of CILLDI it has become even more apparent how great the need is for ongoing resource development. CILLDI participants have talked about what is happening in their own communities and what they think needs to be done in the areas of curriculum and teacher development. In recent years throughout the Canadian prairie provinces there have been several initiatives on the part of First Nations peoples in the area of Indigenous language and curriculum development, and the Western provinces and northern territories have agreed to a common curriculum framework for all Indigenous languages (Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 2000), with each province producing its own curriculum resources (Saskatchewan Education, 1994; Western Canadian Protocol for Collaboration in Basic Education, 2000) These curriculum efforts, however, are focusing primarily on teaching Indigenous languages as a subject, and CILLDI participants have identified the need for resources for the communities and schools that are planning more comprehensive language programs such as immersion or bilingual classes. These fledgling initiatives are an important and hopeful step to save the Indigenous languages of Western Canada from possible extinction, and some of the students at CILLDI have been teachers in the programs; others are community members interested in the development of community linguistic expertise, the extension of language promotion efforts, and adult language programming. Participants from CILLDI are active community members who in many cases are involved in working toward planning for their language by sharing ideas that they have gained from their colleagues and instructors at CILLDI with those in their school and community context. In the past there has been a lack of a framework for interprovincial networking and collaboration for these intensive language retention efforts, and at CILLDI there is a growing recognition of the need for those involved in innovative practice to share expertise and build a professional cadre of language teachers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, researchers, policy planners,

and advocates for Indigenous languages. This is what we see happening at CILLDI.

Potential Indigenous language leaders are finding the opportunity at CILLDI for more intensive learning experiences regarding language education, linguistics, curriculum, and research. Through this continual professional growth, we hope that we will be able to build a base of Indigenous languages, linguistics, and pedagogy necessary to support language policy and program development. In order to have successful comprehensive language development programs, this kind of leadership development is essential. We believe that this leadership development is an invaluable resource, and it is a resource that is just beginning to be tapped, due in part to CILLDI.

Although we are very pleased with the development and success of CILLDI, there is a great deal of work yet that needs to be done. Postsecondary institutions need to recognize the urgency of these issues and examine their mission statements to support these concerns of Indigenous people. Along with mission statements, there is a need to actively plan programs that will address these specified language development concerns of Indigenous Peoples. In order for this to happen, there is a need for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal institutions to support the work of their Indigenous language educators, teacher educators, and linguists; and one important way to do this is to support CILLDI by providing adequate resources on an ongoing basis. The institutions that grant higher education degrees must take an active role in this process. As Indigenous communities see themselves in mainstream universities, these institutions need to validate and recognize Indigenous knowledge and language and therefore create a space, a new partnership, to encourage teachers, researchers, and curriculum developers to move into this specialized field of professional development.

With three years behind us, the CILLDI Advisory Council looks forward to the challenges ahead, recognizing that our efforts to date are a very small beginning. As we reflect on our students' feedback, we realize that, although small, we have made important steps. CILLDI 2003 was expanded to include courses in Introduction to Linguistics; Practical Literacy and Drama in Aboriginal Language Education; Phonetics; Teaching Second Language in Elementary Education; Ethnography: An Inquiry into the Social Contexts of Aboriginal Language, Literacy and Learning; An Introduction to Dene Language and Culture; and Web-based Resource Development for Indigenous Languages. CILLDI 2003 was held at the University of Alberta in Edmonton with an enrolment of some 80 students from across Western and Northern Canada. As CILLDI continues to develop in response to the growing needs, we encourage any interested participants to join us in our language resource building efforts; and, as one of our students said, "Let's all bring one more person next year."

Note

[1]Donna Paskemin, Professor of Native Studies, University of Alberta; Dr. Heather Blair, Professor of Language Arts and Reading in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta; Dr. Sally Rice, Professor in the Department of Linguis-

tics, University of Alberta; Mary Cardinal-Collins, Alberta Learning, Province of Alberta; Priscilla Settee, Director of the Indigenous Peoples Program, University of Saskatchewan; Edie Hygen, Indian Teacher Education Program, University of Saskatchewan; Brenda Ahenakew, Director of Education, Saskatoon Tribal Council; Dolores Sand, Principal of Kihew School in the town of Marcelin, Saskatchewan; and Dr. Sam Robinson, Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Saskatchewan.

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